

**City of Bloomington
Telecommunications Council
Business Meeting – August 11, 2011**

**Common Council Chambers
City Hall at the Showers Building
401 N. Morton St.**

I. Members Present: Eric Ost, Suzann Owen, Carl Zager

Motion was made by Eric Ost to move public comment section to the first point on the agenda, after introductions, basically swapping points II and III. Suzann Owen seconded the motion. All present were in favor.

III. Public Comment

Byron Smith

Gentleman is a Bloomington native, and completely blind individual. He has issues with accessibility issues on the AT&T U-verse system. On the U-verse system, channel 99 is where the PEG channels are located. You then get a scroll down menu, with an arrow, in which a blind person cannot see without assistance. I have to put aside my independence, and ask my wife for help. Even when we can access the PEG channels, Bloomington's PEG channels are not there. The AT&T corporate president's office is aware of this situation. Mr. Smith received a call from a Debbie Mayhue, on the president's staff, and she assured me that they were seeking out solutions. Mr. Smith pointed out to her that he hoped they would not claim it to be a technical issue because the other providers seem to have solved the issue, and have made the PEG channels available to all their subscribers.

Suzann – She thanked Mr. Smith for coming and alluded to the fact that since the franchise law changed the council has been without any influence. This has been the thing that has concerned us the most. It is an issue that is brought up at about every monthly meeting. The excuse is usually that the governmental unit is not delivery the channels in a format that they can use. We know the state law is not being followed by AT&T. Many are aware of this but not much traction is being made to get the problem resolved. The IURC is the source of appeal. They are the only one with any standing over video service providers.

Mr. Smith – I did contact the IURC and spoke with a gentleman named Darren. He said that the IURC does not have any oversight over video service providers. He also asked if he could forward my name to his contact at AT&T

Suzann – Another route of appeal is if you make a complaint thru your state representative and Matt Pierce is willing to carry that forward.

Carl - An article was forwarded to us about a group called American Community Television. In July 2011, this group asked the attorney general in the following states: California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, North Carolina, Ohio, and Tennessee to investigate the method by which AT & T delivers PEG channels on its U-verse platform. The reason the investigation was asked for deals with where those channels are, and ACT maintains is that the structure of the U-verse PEG system with the drill down menu denies service to person with visual handicaps and make it impossible to access service without assistance. AT & T in response to the article ignores the question and simply says they have a wonderful PEG system and carry 100's of PEG channels of the U-verse system.

Eric – I'm astonished that the IURC is telling people who call about video service providers, that they do not have any oversight. If that is the case then who does have oversight? One of the benefits of the contract with the State of Indiana was unified franchising. This process was to make it easier for entities to compete. I made list of all the entities involved in this problem, one entity being the telecommunications council, and most are disempowered. I would encourage you to call Representative Matt Pierce, as well as the City of Bloomington, to register your complaint.

Lennon Beasley (Monthly report for July)

*New program "Summer Mania", includes the Holiday World Adventure, 2 programs

*Class Reunion 2011 program done

*Produced 33 new programs, including new bowling practice shows

*Thanked Adam for making him the producer of the month for July.

*Competed in the Summer Special Olympics, in track and field, and bowling.

* 2 new series Wipe-Out (spin off from Music Town) and Turn the Beat Around (Open mic night productions)

Eric – Do any of your programs about Special Olympics deal with your getting ready for your event? Or did you interview other participants in those events?

Lennon – No, I haven't interviewed any participant, but did interview people from the class reunion.

II. Approval of Minutes:

Suzann Owen motioned that the minutes from the June meeting be approved. Carl seconded the motion. Discussion: Suzann had correction made on a hard copy that she would turn over to the ITS representative. Also, a copy of the proposal should be attached to the minutes of this meeting, and be put into record. All approved with corrections.

Carl motioned to approve the July minutes. Suzann seconded. Discussion: Eric mentioned that he appreciated the transcript form and the level of detail. All approved.

IV. Reports and Announcements

1. Telecom Members

Carl (Report) – During a recent meeting, an individual brought up some issues with the EAS system. He is a Comcast subscriber. The issues include apparent activation of the EAS system on add-on devices; such as X-Box, and Wii systems, without any alerts coming thru. These add-on devices due state that alerts should come thru. Some others reported that similar alerts were coming thru on their television but had no information when the interrupt occurred. This also included locking up their system. This month there was a hostage/shooting situation that took place in the City of Bloomington. In the past, when such events have occurred local law enforcement, public safety, and emergency management could have used the local interrupt to notify the community of the danger. Only local broadcast media and newspaper with online were providing reports. We understand that there was a problem with the switch over from analog to digital. We have presented some possible solutions by using the National Weather Service. We've asked the city to look into this, and report back to us. We've heard nothing. We need to seriously begin gathering information to discover if there are alternatives to using the three video service providers as a major source of information.

Suzann – What are you thinking of when it comes to alerts? Things like texting or cell phone alerts?

Carl - We need any type of suggestions.

Eric – We've had a serious breakdown in communication. These people bring these issues before us. We are trying to facilitate communication.

Suzann (Report) – Trends within telecommunications mentioned an article about Netflix's. The move is to get people to stream video and move away from DVD's. A point was made that there are negotiations going on between AT&T and T-Mobile. It seems that AT&T wants T-Mobile because of the amount of broadband they have. AT&T needs it for video streaming. Discussion has halted for now, due to the uncertainty of the stock market.

A SHORT 5 MINUTE RECESS WAS HELD

2. CATS - Michael White

- Monthly programming

-The sling box is working quite well with the meetings taking place in the justice building. Thanks to all who helped this become possible.

-Budget Hearings: In the past, there has been a 50/50 plan in place. A few years ago the town of Ellettsville fell away from contributing but last year was able to contribute some toward the 50/50 plan. On the 18th, we learned that the City of Bloomington due to some fiscal restraints weren't sure they would be able to support the 50/50 plan like in past years. A meeting was held of the funding partners. The funding partners being: the Monroe County Library (Sarah Laughlin), CATS(Michael White), City of Bloomington ITS Department (Rick Dietz), Monroe County Commissioners (Patrick Stouffers), and Town of Ellettsville (Sandy Hash). Sarah Laughlin will be writing a summary of the meeting, that will be included in next month's report. Briefly, there was great unity on how CATS is valued. Everyone wants to be able to support fully. It looks like we'll be okay for next year, but there was no firm commitment set for the future. We also talked about having a funding partners meeting once a year.

Suzann – We are concerned about the revenue coming thru the franchise fees. This is a reflection of the number of subscribers. There is a rumor that people are cutting the cord. The most cancellations of subscriptions are coming from Direct TV and Dish Network customers, rather than land based video service providers. Video service providers are paying the most attention to upgrading people, to get more services from them in order for their gross income to go up. CATS revenue stream should continue to grow, as long as they increase.

Carl – We need to be looking into alternative sources of income. Franchise fees are not the most stable, sustainable method of funding given the political climate. You made a comment that CATS was looking into improving the quality of the transmission, output, and move to a higher definition. Is there room to plan that, given the air of uncertainty?

Michael – The goal of the funding partners is to have a dependable source of income. Unfortunately, when the state law changed, CATS and other small stations could no longer access capital grants thru franchise agreements. We have some money in reserve but

is not enough to make that transition to HD. We could do it in parts, but we want to make sure in our main control area we can relay everything to the public.

Eric – The folks that are unsubscribing are doing so due to cost. Many are also changing their viewing habits. There were three pieces of legislation this last session that could have affected the franchise fees. Ranging from getting rid of it altogether, to changing the way the franchise fees are calculated and how to assess them a revenue tax, which would apply to satellite providers as well. As a council, as individuals, as a community, we have a role to play in figuring out what to do as the market changes, technology changes, and legislation changes. In the future, I feel that we need to convene a meeting to discuss these issues. In the 30 years of the Telecommunications Council, this body has played a significant role in requesting proposal, making recommendations to the Board of Public Works for allocation of fees. This body was fundamental in the allocation and delegation of the PEG channels in advance of the Indiana video law of 2006. One of the things the state legislature is going to review is how these franchise fees are being spent. Monroe County, City of Bloomington, and the Town of Ellettsville have all genuinely aspired a very grand vision of how these funds are spend and benefit the community.

Carl – What is the predominant model across the country of PEG providers? Is it groups like the public library, or is it the government itself?

Michael – The model we have here is more the exception then the rule. Typically government access across the country is run by the government. One of the priceless things we gain here is the neutrality the library provides in covering government meetings.

Carl – Does any of this go back to the days when the access portion was generally handled by the cable company?

Michael - Yes, that was the way it was done.

Carl – Are they doing that anywhere?

Michael – Local origination is one of the five forms of access television. Yes, they are! Comcast is doing a little local stuff and I think Smithville plans too. A dedicated constitutional forum that the library represents, no one does at all.

Eric – In many states that do not have a statewide franchise law, an agreement is arranged between municipalities and cable providers, there are grants, and resources provided. Many arrangements like that were resended in the State of Indiana after the 2006 law. One of those is to provide origination resources, studio time etc. to community groups.

Carl – The dilemma we are dealing with is that for whatever reason the production capability for access programming doesn't exist in many of the locations where there are PEG channels. Secondedly, while government entities could manage the display of government meeting on PEG channels. It seems like there could always be the question of whether it is the government voice or the people's voice. I think this is all tied to funding. We need to continue to grow and support the PEG channels presence in the video system, or on some delivery system that the majority of people in the city and county could have access too. If funding starts to squeeze what's going to go? It depends a lot on who is running the ship.

Eric – We have a valuable opportunity in access television to choose to exercise our right to freedom of speech. Being that PEG channel access began in 1976 thru the library is a real testimonial to this community's value system.

V. Information from or about Video Service Provider – None

VI. New Business

There is availability of a position on the Telecommunicaitons Council. The person will have to be appointed by the City Council. Anyone interested can send their application to the city clerk.

VII. Adjournment

A motion was made by Suzann that the meeting be adjourned.

Next Regular Meeting

September 6th, 2011

Common Council Chambers in City Hall at the Showers Building
401 N. Morton St.